

Star-Bulletin mobile edition

Vol. 13, Issue 83 - Sunday, March 23, 2008



DENNIS ODA / DODA@STARBULLETIN.COM

Fabian and Regina Gaglac, parents of Sgt. Alexander Gaglac, visited their son's grave site Friday at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in observance of what was supposed to be his 29th birthday. Gaglac was killed in Iraq on Sept. 9. Fabian Gaglac was holding the Hawaii Medal of Honor that will officially be presented to the family Tuesday in a ceremony at the state House of Representatives.

Hawaii's fallen warriors

Lawmakers will pay tribute to service members who have died in the past year by awarding the Hawaii Medal of Honor

By Gregg K. Kakesako
gkakesako@starbulletin.com

Families from Middlefield, Mass., Kingston Springs, Tenn., and as far as the Philippines and Morocco will gather Tuesday in the chamber of the state House of Representatives as lawmakers pay tribute to service members who have died in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan in the past year.

Thirty-one service members with ties to the islands will be honored for their sacrifices with the yellow-and-red Hawaii Medal of Honor created by Hawaii Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Pollick three years ago under legislation authored by Rep. Mark Takai, a Hawaii Army National Guard medical officer.

Since the medal was conceived in 2005, lawmakers have awarded 120 medals in 2007 and 67 last year to surviving spouses and family members.

Takai, in a House floor speech earlier this month, said, "It has almost been five years since the war on terrorism began. While there continues to be much debate for and against this war, there is no debate

about the tremendous sacrifices made by our service members and their families."

He added, "In the past five years, the war against terrorism has changed our world and our lives in a profound way. Ultimately, it's not about politics, it's not about money and it's not even about winning. It's all about the families and their loved ones and what these brave men and women sacrificed to our country."

Among the 19 families who will be present Tuesday will be Regina and Fabian Gagalac, whose son, Sgt. Alexander Gagalac, would have celebrated his 29th birthday on Friday.

Gagalac was killed Sept. 9, 2007, just weeks before he was to return home. He died in Al Hawijah, Iraq, from injuries sustained from a rocket-propelled grenade while on a combat patrol. Gagalac, a Leilehua High School graduate, was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 27th Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. He was serving his second combat tour in Iraq when he was killed.

On Good Friday, nearly three dozen of the Gagalac family and the mother's side of the family gathered at his Punchbowl grave site to celebrate his birthday and that of his twin brother, Alexis.

Both brothers were in Iraq at the same time in 2004 -- Alexander with the 25th Division and Alexis with the 1st Stryker Combat Brigade, sent from Fort Lewis, Wash. Alexis Gagalac left the Army and re-enlisted into the Hawaii Army National Guard and was assigned to Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 299th Cavalry.

Regina Gagalac said the last time she saw her son Alexander was when he was home on leave last year and celebrated his 28th birthday.

He spent that day at his favorite surf spot -- Ala Moana Park -- with his twin brother.

It has been six months since she got the call from the Army informing her of her son's death.

"The hurt is still there," she said, "and it doesn't seem to go away. ... It has left a void in my heart and turned me upside down. ... I can't accept the fact that he is gone."

The death of his twin brother has also deeply affected Alexis Gagalac, who has left the Hawaii Army National Guard and will transfer to the Hawaii Air National Guard.

He visits his brother's grave site every day, carefully tending to it as he did on Friday when he removed a small American flag because it was tattered and replaced it with a newer one.

His mother said Alexis has changed.

"Each person handles their grief differently," she told reporters.

Regina Gagalac wants her surviving son to represent her family on Tuesday to accept the Hawaii medal.

She commends Takai for his efforts in honoring the fallen soldiers, sailors and airmen from Hawaii.

"They are doing a meaningful job," she said, "recognizing fallen warriors like my son.

"Recognition for me for my son's services is very important so I know that my son didn't die in vain."

Recipients of the Hawaii Medal of Honor include members of the U.S. armed forces, the U.S. military reserves and the Hawaii National Guard who were residents of the state of Hawaii, attended an educational institution in Hawaii or were stationed in Hawaii at the time of their death, Takai said.

"It will continue until everyone is back."

Hawaii Medal of Honor Recipients

The following 31 service members with Hawaii ties who died in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait will be honored Tuesday at the state House of Representatives:

Air Force Airman 1st Class Jerome Ware Jr.
Navy Lt. Cmdr. Morgan C. Tulang
Army Sgt. Forrest D. Cauthorn
Army Private 1st Class Jay S. Cajimat
Marine Corps Maj. Douglas A. Zembiec
Army Cpl. Casey P. Zylman
Army 1st Lt. Keith N. Heidtman
Army Chief Warrant Officer Theodore U. Church
Army Sgt. Richard V. Correa
Air Force Senior Airman William N. Newman
Army Spc. Farid Elazzouzi
Army Sgt. Derek T. Roberts
Army Spc. Val J. Borm
Army 1st. Lt. Frank B. Walkup IV
Army Sgt. Michael J. Montpetit
Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Robert A. Lynch
Army Spc. Tyler R. Seideman
Army Spc. Jessy G. Pollard
Army Spc. Michael A. Hook
Army Cpl. Nathan C. Hubbard
Army Cpl. Joshua S. Harmon
Army Cpl. Phillip J. Brodnick
Army Cpl. Jeremy P. Bouffard
Army Sgt. Garrett I. McLead
Army Staff Sgt. Jason L. Paton
Army Capt. Derek A. Dobogai
Army Sgt. Alexander U. Gaglac
Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Mark R. Cannon
Army Pvt. 1st Class Casey P. Mason
Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Victor W. Jeffries
Army Spc. Jon M. Schoolcraft II

Source: State Rep. Mark Takai

[Read 2 comments »](#)

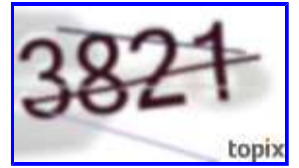
Type in your comments to post to the forum

**Name
(appears
on your
post)**

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:

Post Comment



*Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback](#).*

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2008/03/23/news/story07.html>
© 1996-2008 The Honolulu Star-Bulletin | www.starbulletin.com